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Editorial: Educating Towards Deep Ecological Sensibilities

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NICKY: To wander and to wonder are fitting descriptors of my life. My wandering has led me from the east to the west and back again, several times over; exploring both the inner and outer realms of wilderness. I have journeyed through steep canyon walls that have humbled me and enabled me to grasp my insignificance in the greater scheme of things. I have paddled on lakes and rivers in the mountains, prairies, on the Canadian Shield, and amongst desert sands that have all taught me to move in accordance with the flow of life rather than countering our own nature and that of the surrounding world. I have hiked on trails travelled by thousands as well as on barrens and streambeds likely untouched by direct human presence, both of which have helped me to dispel the myth of dualism and inspired feelings of being a part of, rather than apart from, the natural world. I recognize and celebrate the fact that my wandering has enabled me to become grounded in a deeply felt and profoundly experienced sense of relationship with the Earth. My wandering reflects a deep sense of devotion to an ongoing journey of discovering self and place.

As I wander, I also wonder... I wonder how I can empower others to assume greater responsibility for their own learning and personal development. I wonder how I can help folks achieve a greater sense of harmony with themselves, others and the natural world. I wonder how to enhance creativity and nurture divergent thought. I wonder why playing music and singing are always so uplifting. I wonder why I don't play more and work less. I wonder about the ebb and flow inherently present in all of life's relationships. I wonder about and thrive in life's mysteries. I often wonder, and wander, in what appear to be fuzzy grey areas between the distinctive black and white.

My latest journey has led me to the Gulf of Maine bioregion, where I join students and co-faculty of the Audubon Expedition Institute as we seek to co-create a more environmentally and socially just world. Much wandering and wondering remain to be done...

BOB: I enjoyed early years at children's summer camps as camper, counsellor and travel guide. Thanks to these formative experiences, I learned early on to suspect the soundness of my cultural map rather than to suspect the soundness of my perceptions (as E.F. Schumacher put it). I have been involved in Outdoor Education pretty much full time all the time as I see it. I try to teach in classrooms and institutional settings as a travel guide might. By this I mean, I try to engage students in a disorientation from individual, competitive, consumptive schooling towards a co-investigative community of learners. I try to ensure a healthy amount of time for inquiry that brings us directly down to earth, "with" the Earth. I see this task as cultural work much more than school work. This effort has led to many pedagogical explorations "with" students. Working at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, in a Kinesiology and the Arts and Science program has led to a winter love affair with our local marsh, Cootes Paradise, and its skiff of snow and ice and the same regard for the Dundas Valley in the autumn. I split my time between the valley town of Dundas, Ontario, and Algonquin Park where I cut my teeth with paddle in hand. I hope to continue to explore these areas with my partner Kathleen, young family, and student groups.

We are very excited by this opportunity to serve as editors for a theme issue of *The Trumpeter* entitled, "Educating towards Deep Ecological Sensibilities." While there are many who would suggest that the aims of the deep ecology movement, ecosophy and the like are unattainable, wild eyed idealistic visions for the relationship of humans to the earth, trapped in a comforting but marginalizing discourse etc. etc. We, on the other hand, have as individuals and friends (many of these writers are so) maintained that deep ecocentric actions are "out there" and being practiced in the name of education. Ideas, concepts, theories bent on cultivating ecological consciousness that have surfaced to educators have been useful to many. They are being acted upon with long term visionary passion for moral agency, reality based viability and a celebratory joy of doing what is worth doing.

Approaches that consciously and intentionally work within a curricular structure and sets of aspirations that support the deep ecology movement are many and varied. There exist also many perspectives that are rich in potential, although unconscious or ignorant of deep ecology, are nevertheless actively furthering the deep ecology movement. People, educators - young and old - are gaining the

insight that we must, as Theodore Roszak (1972) once put it, have the honesty to confront our culture. We must bring ourselves to question cultural assumptions and practices and of equal importance we need to act upon this reflective process. As noted by Chuck Chamberlin within these pages, the eighth principle of deep ecology platform (see p. 83) is what makes the other seven revolutionary in character rather than a merely rebellious muse.

The writers in this volume of *The Trumpeter* come from diverse educational settings. Perspectives within include eco-theatre, a naturalists' view, activism, classroom teaching, travel guiding, personal lifestyle issues, community initiatives and philosophical inquiry. It is certain that all writers approach education experientially with a strong focus on being, knowing, valuing and connecting to the out-of-doors. They also share a spirit of experimentation and creativity. There is much happening/evolving in the name, and in the framing inspiration, of the deep ecology movement in education for all ages. The key players in creating educational programs, lifestyle change, recreational offerings, however, are more than likely working as the innovators themselves, forging their own ideas into practice. The role models are only now being identified within our communities of elders and our dynamic youthful leadership. We are presenting the work of some of these people here. Many here have influenced and supported our own efforts through word and example.

Moral responsibility is a shared attitude amongst these authors. There is an exploration of enculturation throughout these writings as the environmental/social crisis is taken as a given. The hidden curriculum to avoid fundamental change towards increased social justice and eco-centric practice is strong. Within these pages, the authors and artists and poets publicly respond to the challenges of teaching for such change. This responsible agency is a reflection of a revolutionary character for change, quite a different notion of change than that furthered by the rebellious character (Fromm, 1963, p. 113). The revolutionary (a strong but appropriate word) does not seek to overthrow some structural order so as to gain power over the order and then perpetuate similar mistakes. This is the response of the rebel: no vision outside of self gain, the oppressed becoming the oppressor. The revolutionary character, on the other hand, seeks to change, to better the existing order in the name of truth, beauty, goodness and adventure.¹ The revolutionary character seeks genuine change and is willingly changed throughout the process. The path is less clear. The vision is long term, what Michael Harrington calls "visionary gradualism" (in McLaughlin, 1993, p. 200). The change is measurable in behavior, in more viable ecological and social consciousness, in a more caring world for *all* beings. What could be more rewarding and more difficult? This is why we are excited by this issue of *The Trumpeter*. In it there are rewards, difficulties, setbacks and celebrations, throughout the "adventure" of education moving towards deep ecological territory.

We are faithful *Trumpeter* readers and we wish to focus on one broad theme. We are knowledgeable about the Audubon Expedition Institute (A.E.I.) which

is presented here as an example of an educational program that consciously and intentionally works from a deep ecological mission. This exemplary AEI program in outdoor experiential/environmental (one might add eco-political) education is not alone. Large and small, there are many educational programs and lifestyle ways that are consistent with the deep ecology movement. We do not provide a listing of programs, types and places, but attempt to capture samples of the thinking and action explored and expressed by members of far reaching, far thinking, down to earth communities.

Finally, for newcomers to both the deep ecology movement and to education that is critically pragmatic - that is, education that attempts to actively reshape our inherited educational structures "as judgements are made about good/bad, beautiful/ugly, true/false in the context of our communities and our attempts to build them anew" (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 179) - a few definitions serve to launch this collection of writings. As Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen once put it, "and, *friluftsliv* 2 for your thoughts" (in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993, p. 12).

Helpful Definitions

Definition of *experiential education*, as approved by the Association for Experiential Education Board of Directors, November 3, 1994. Experiential education is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences.

Elements of experiential education: individual learner involvement, education not classroom bound, education not teacher bound, living in the present, preparation for a changing world.

All other definitions are from "*An Ecophilosopher's Dictionary: Basic concepts for ecocentric exploration.*," by Alan Drengson, 1994, Lightstar Press.

Deep Ecology Movement is a grass roots, world wide, political movement that is sometimes called *radical environmentalism*. It is characterized by support for Naess' and Sessions' eight *platform principles*. Supporters of the Deep Ecology Movement agree that we cannot go on with business as usual; human numbers and technology are destroying the ecological systems; we must make fundamental changes in our values and practices; these require recognizing that there are values inherent in Nature, and thinking, speaking and acting ecocentrically. Persons support this platform from a number of different ultimate philosophies or religions.

Ecocentric refers to a value system and attitude that humans are only part of larger ecological processes and systems. Natural and human communities are folded into one another. We cannot avoid participation in these communities.

Our primary responsibility as *Homo sapiens* and moral agents is to take responsibility for ourselves. The *environmental crisis* is a result of collective and personal failure in responsibility.

Ecological consciousness is sometimes contrasted with lack of ecological consciousness, that is, behavior and thought which ignores ecological realities and has no sense of participating the larger context of place. The ultimate aim of the environmental movement, say many, is to develop ecological consciousness so that our social and cultural life manifest *ecosophy*, that is, ecological harmony and wisdom. Ecological consciousness can take many forms, just as there are many forms of *ecosophy*.

Ecosophy literally means the wisdom of the household place. It implies the wisdom to dwell harmoniously and nondestructively in a place. It involves being receptive and responsive to the needs of a place and the wisdom that Nature has enfolded into that place with its many beings, communities, and organizations. Ecosophy can deepen throughout one's life, and throughout a culture's life. The term was coined by Arne Naess to refer to ultimate philosophies based on ecocentric values. There are many *ecosophies*.

Self-realization is a central concept in many philosophies, e.g. Gandhi's, Spinoza's and also Arne Naess' Ecosophy T. If the idea is understood broadly, it is found in all major religions as part of the inner core of sacred, spiritual teachings. Extension of identification is one way to practice expanding our capacity for care and understanding. Then we *spontaneously* act in nonviolent ways that are creative and cooperative, which help others to realize themselves. When we extend our identification and realize our *Ecological Self*, we are transcending identification with a smaller insecure ego self.

Notes

1. Alfred North Whitehead in *Adventures of Ideas* (1947) refers to the importance of adventure for the promotion and preservation of civilization. He writes, "But, given the vigour of adventure, sooner or later the leap of imagination reaches beyond the safe limits of the epoch, and beyond the safe limits of learned rules of taste. It then produces the dislocations and confusions marking the advent of new ideals for civilized effort." (p. 360).
2. *Friluftsliv* literally means, a way home to the open air. It denotes a relationship with nature that involves meeting nature on nature's terms, coming to know nature as home. For more on this Norwegian phrase, see Reed and Rothenberg (eds.), and also the article on page 93 in this issue of *The Trumpeter*.

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